

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05 PRS-01
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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4261
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0421

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, GY
SUBJECT: REACTIONS TO PRESS REPORTS OF CIA PAYMENTS

REF: GEORGETOWN 0391

SUMMARY: GUYANESE ARE TEETERING ON BRINK OF ISSUING A STATE-
MENT DENYING THAT BURNHAM HAD FINANCIAL LINKS WITH CIA. STATE-
MENT WOULD BE Milder IN TONE THi THAT WHICH PRESIDENT PEREZ
HAS HAD HIS AMBASSADOR HERE, AND I AM TOLD, IN OTHER CAPITALS,
ISSUE DENYING PRESS ALLEGATIONS OF FINANCIAL LINKS TO CIA.
GUYANA'S DENIAL WAS PREPARED TODAY BY PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE, BUT WILLS AT MY URGING HAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY STOPPED
ITS PUBLICATION. IT REFERRED TO "POLITICAL" MOTIVATIONS
BEHIND THE US PRESS STORIES. END SUMMARY.

1. TWICE THIS WEEK SINCE HIS PHONE CALL ON FEBRUARY 19,
WILLS HAD DISCUSSED WITH ME THE WASHINGTON POST AND THE NEW
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YORK TIMES ARTICLES ALLEGING THAT FINANCIAL LINKS EXIST
BETWEEN THE CIA AND BURNHAM. EACH TIME WILLS SHOWED WORRY
ABOUT THE MATTER AND FELT THAT THE GOG SHOULD
RESPOND PUBLICLY WITH DENIALS. DURING A MEETING IN HIS OFFICE
FEB 24 HE ASKED MY ADVICE. I TOLD HIM THAT SPEAKING PERSONALLY
I THOUGHT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE FOR THE GOG TO
REMAIN SILENT UNLESS PRESSURES BECAME UNBERABLE.

2. BOTH OF US WERE AWARE THAT VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR MARQUEZ WAS TRANSLATING FROM SPANISH TO ENGLISH A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT PEREZ FOR PUBLICATION IN LOCAL PAPERS. AS ONLY ONE SMALL INNOCUOUS ARTICLE HAD APPEARED IN THE LOCAL PRESS, WILLS WAS NOT PLEASED OVER MARQUEZ' PLANS.

3. TODAY (FEB 25) IN A FULL PAGE PAID ADVERTISEMENT, PEREZ' STATEMENT WAS PUBLISHED BY MARQUEZ. IT CONTAINED A FLAT DENIAL THAT PEREZ HAD RECEIVED CIA MONEY AND ALLEGED THAT THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES OF "THIS DOWNRIGHT MANEUVER AGAINST VENEZUELA" RIDICULING ITS HEAD OF STATE WERE REACTIONS TO THE NATIONALIZATION BY VENEZUELA OF ITS IRON ORE AND OIL INDUSTRIES, ITS RESPONSIBLE POSITION AGAINST THE ABUSES OF TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALISM AND ITS "OPEN AND DEDICATED POSITION ON THE THIRD WORLD." IT ALLEGED THAT VENEZUELA FELT THREATENED AND THAT "IT IS UNBELIEVABLE THAT THE VILE ACCUSATIONS PUBLISHED BY ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT NEWSPAPERS OF THE USA AND THE MENTION OF THE CIA AS THE SOURCE OF THE INFORMATION COULD HAVE BEEN MADE WITHOUT CONFORMING TO PLANS THAT COMPROMISE VERY HIGH US GOVERNMENT CIRCLES." IT SAID THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S SINCERITY OF PURPOSE IS BEING SUBMITTED TO A SERIOUS TEST AND "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS UNDER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE VENEZUELAN NATION, HAVING INSULTED ITS CHIEF OF STATE, TO DENY THIS INDIGNANT AND FALSE ACCUSATION."

4. THE PUBLICATION OF PEREZ' DENIAL AND HIS ACCUSATIONS, COUPLED WITH THE REPORTS CIRCULATING IN GEORGETOWN THAT BURNHAM'S NAME WAS ALSO MENTIONED IN THE U.S. NEWS ARTICLES, HAVE CAUSED ANXIETIES
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TO SHOOT UP AGAIN. THIS AFTERNOON (FEB 25) I WENT TO WILLS' OFFICE TO DISCUSS ANOTHER MATTER. WHILE I WAS THERE HE RECEIVED A CALL FROM INFORMATION MINISTER SHIRLEY FIELD-RIDLEY SAYING THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (MINISTER OF STATE CHRISTOPHER NASCIMENTO) HAD SENT HER A COMMUNIQUE FOR PUBLICATION. SHE FELT THAT IT HAD CERTAIN QUESTIONABLE THINGS IN IT AND WANTED WILLS TO REVIEW IT. WHEN IT WAS DELIVERED TO HIM, WILLS LET ME READ THE PRESS RELEASE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS NOT AS HARD-HITTING AS PEREZ' STATEMENT, IT ALLUDED TO "POLITICAL PURPOSES" BEHIND THE NEWS STORIES.

5. I REACTED STRONGLY TELLING WILLS THAT AN INDIGNANT REACTION WHICH IN ANY WAY IMPLIED THAT THE US GOVERNMENT OR "POLITICAL INTERESTS" WERE INVOLVED COULD UPSET HIS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE US-GUYANESE RELATIONS, I REPEATED THAT I STILL THOUGHT THE BEST TACTIC REGARDING THE PRESS STORIES WAS TO REMAIN SILENT. WILLS AGREED AND CALLED MINISTER FIELD-RIDLEY TELLING HER NOT TO RELEASE IT UNTIL HE HAD TIME TO REVIEW IT THOROUGHLY, TOMORROW. HE THEN TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD CONTINUE TO SIT ON IT OVER THE WEEKEND.

A PROBLEM , HE SAID, WAS THAT EVERYBODY AROUND THE PRIME MINISTER WANTED TO BE "PURER THAN THE POPE" IN DEFENDING BURNHAM AND THEY WERE COMPETING WITH EACH OTHER IN DEFENDING HIM.

6. COMMENT: WILLS WAS GOING TO SEE BURNHAM IMMEDIATELY AFTER MEETING WITH ME. I AM TO SEE HIM AGAIN TOMORROW MORNING ON THIS AND OTHER MATTERS. I AM HOPEFUL THAT GUYANESE FEARS AND EMOTIONS DO NOT INDUCE THEM TO ENGAGE IN THE SAME PYROTECHNICS THAT THE VENEZUELANS HAVE EXHIBITED. THE ATMOSPHERE HERE IS VERY VOLATILE AT THE MOMENT. THE GUYANESE MAY SUCCUMB TO THE COMPULSION TO SPEAK OUT, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY KNOW HOW VULNERABLE BURNHAM IS ON THE CIA ALLEGATIONS. BLACKEN

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